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Colonel SIDNEY'S SPEECH,

Delivered to the

SHERIFF

On the Scaffold December 7th 1683.

ANNO 1683.

Colonel SIDNEY'S

SPEECH,

Delivered to the *Sheriff* on the Scaffold.

MEn, Bretheren, Fathers, Countreymen and Strangers; It may be expected that I ſhould ſay ſome great matters to you, but the rigor' of the ſeaſon, and the infirmity of my age, (increaſed by a cloſs impriſonement of above five month's) do not permit me. Moreover we live in an age, that makes *Truth* paſs for *Treaſon*; And as I dar not ſay any thing againſt it, ſo the ears of thoſe that are about me will probably be found to tender to hear it. This my Trial and Condemnation do ſufficiently evidence. *Weſt*, *Rumſey* and *Keeling*, who are brought to prove the *Plot*, ſay no more of me than that they know me not: But that ſome (equally unknown to me) had uſed my name, and the names of ſeveral other perſons, to give ſome little reputation unto their deſignes. The Lord *Howard* is too infamous by his life, and the many *perjuries* not to be denyed, whereof he hath been guilty to deſerve mention. And being but a *ſingle* witneſs, his Teſtimony could be of no value, tho he had been of unblemiſhed credit. Or had none ſeen, nor himſelf confeſſed, that the crimes committed by him, could be pardoned only for committing more. And even the *pardon* that was promiſed him, could not be obtained, till the *Drudgery* of ſwearing was over. Thus his Teſtimony being layd aſide, the whole matter is reduced to the papers, ſaid to be found in my Cloſet by the Kings Officers, without

any other proof of their being written by me, than what was taken from ſuſpition upon the ſimilitude of a hand, that is eaſily counterfeited, and which had been lately declared in the *Lady Carr's* caſe to be no lawful evidence in criminal cauſes. But if I had been ſeen to write them, the matter would not be much alter'd. They plainly appear to relate to a large Treatiſe written long ſince in Anſwer to *Filmers* Book, which by all intelligent men is thought to be grounded upon wicked principles equally pernicious to Magiſtrates and People. If he might publiſh unto the world his opinion, viz. that all men are born under a neceſſity derived from the Laws of God and Nature to ſubmitt to an abſolute Kingly Government, which could be reſtrained by no Law or Oath. And that he who hath the *Power*, whether he come unto it by Creation, Election, Inheritance, Uſurpation, or any other way, hath the *Right*. And that none muſt oppoſe his *Will*, but the Perſons and Eſtates of his Subjects muſt be indiſpenſably ſubject unto it. If he might publish ſuch a Book? I know not why I might not have publiſhed my opinion to the contrary without the breach of any Law; and as freely, (as *he*) have publickly declared *my* thoughts and the reaſons upon which they were grounded. And I am perſwaded to believe, that God had left Nations to the liberty of ſetting up ſuch Governments as beſt pleaſed themſelves, and that Magiſtrates were ſet up for the good of Nations, not Nations for the honor and glory of Magiſtrates. That the Right and Power of Magiſtrates in every Countrey, was that which the Laws of that Countrey made it to be. That theſe *Laws* are to be *obſerved*, and the *Oaths* taken by *Rulers* to be kept. And that having the Force of contracts between Magiſtrates and People, they can not be violated without danger of diſſolving the whole *Fabrick*. That Uſurpations can give no Right. That the moſt dangerous of all Enemies unto *Kings*, are they who raiſing their power to an exorbitant height, allow unto Uſurpers all Rights belonging to them. For uſurpations being ſeldom compaſſed without the ſlaughter of Reigning Perſons and their Family's; the worſt of Villanies ſhould thereby be rewarded with the moſt glorious Priviledges. That if ſuch Doctrines were received, they would ſtir up men to the deſtruction of Princes with more violence, than all the paſſions that have hitherto raged in the hearts

hearts of the most unruly. That no Magistrates could be safe, if such rewards were proposed unto any that could destroy them. That few men would be so gentle as to spare even the *best*, if by their destruction, *vile Usurpers* could become *Gods anointed*, and by the most execrabl' wickedness invest themselves with that Divine Character. This is the Scope of the whole *Treatise*, and the Writer gives such reasons as at present did occurr unto him to prove it. This seems to agree with the Doctrines of the most renown'd Authors of all times, Nations and Religions. The *best* and *wisest Kings* have ever acknowledged it. The present *King* of *France* hath declared, that Kings have that happy want of power, that they can do nothing contrary to the Laws of their Countries, and grounded his quarrel with the *King* of *Spain* Anno 1667. upon that principle. King *James* in his *Speech* to the Parliament Anno 1663. doth in the highest degree assert it. The *Scripture* seems to declare it. If nevertheless the *Writer* were mistaken, he might have been refuted by Law, Reason and Scripture. No man for such matters was ever otherwise punished, than by being made to see his error. And it hath not (as I think) been ever known, that they have been referred to the judgment of a jury, composed of men utterly unable to comprehend them. Yet this is but litle of my case, the extravagance of my Persecuters goes higher. The abovementioned Treatise was never finished; nor could be in many years, and most probably would never have been. So much as is of it, was written long since, never revieued, nor shown unto any man. Scarce the *fiftieth part* of it was produced, and the *tenth part* of that was not suffered to be read. That which was never shown unto those who are said to have consprired with me, was said to have been intended to stirr up the people in prosecution of the designes of the conspirators. When no application unto time, place or persons, could be found in it, (as had ever been done by those who endeaveured to raise insurrections) all is supplyed by *innuendo*. Whatsoever is said of the expulsion of *Tarquin*, the insurrection against *Nero*, the slaughter of *Caligula* or *Domitian*, the translation of the Crown of *France*, from *Meroveus* race unto *Pippin's*, and from kis *Descendants* unto *Hugh Capet* &c. is all applyed by *innuendo* unto the King. They have not considered that if such Acts of State be not

good, there is not a King in the world that hath any Title to his Crown. Nor can his *Heir* have any, unless He could deduce his pedigree from the eldest Son of *Noah*, and shew that the Succession had still continued in the Eldest of the eldest Linie, and been so deduced unto him. All may see what advantage this would be to all the Kings of the world, and whether that failing, it were not bettet for them to acknowledg they had received their Crowns by the consent of willing Nations, or to have no better *Title* to them than Usurpation and Violence, which by the same way's may be taken from them.

But I was long since told, that I must die, or the plott die. And least the means of destroying the best Protestans in England should faile, the Bench must be filled with such as had been blemished at the Bar. None but such as these would have adviced with the *Kings Counced* of the *means to bring* a man to death: suffered a *jury* to be *empannelled* by the *Kings Sollicitor* and the *Under-Sheriff*: *Admit* of *jury men* who are not *Freeholders*. *Receive* such *Evidence* as is above mentioned. *Refuse* a *copy* of the *Indictment*, and not *suffer* the *Stat. 46. Ed. 3.* to be read, that doth expresly enact it should in no case be denyed to any man upon any occasion whatsoever. To overule the most important *Points* of *Law* without hearing. And whereas the *Stat. 25. Ed. 3.* (upon which they said I should be tryed) doth reserve unto the *Parliament* all *Construction* to be made in poins of Treason; they could assume unto themselves not only a power to make *Constructions*, but such *Constructions* as neither agree with Law, Reason, nor Common Sence.

By them and their means, I am brought unto this place. The Lord forgive their practices, and avert the evils that threaten the Nation from them. The Lord sanctifie these my sufferings unto me and tho I fall as a Sacrifice unto the ---- *Idols*, suffer not *Idolatry* to be established in this Land. Bless thy people, and save them. Defend thy own cause, and those that defend it. Stirr up such as are faint. Direct those that are willing. Confirm those that waver. Give Wisdom and Integrity unto All. Order all things so, as may most redound unto thine own Glory. Grant that I may die Glorifying the for all thy Mercies, and that as the last

thou

thou haſt permitted me to be ſingled out as a Witneſs of thy Truth, and even by the Confeſſion of my Oppoſors, for that *Old Cauſe, in which I was from may youth engaged, and for which thou haſt often and wonderfully declared thy ſelf.*